

## IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) Ear tag for marking and identifying animals comprising a male tag panel with a punch that, in use, perforates the animal's ear and penetrates into ~~the~~ hollow head-(2) of a female tag panel-1 under the action of an applicator tool, ~~clamp~~, characterised in that one of the male or female tag panels is provided with a sampling device~~means~~-(7), lateral to the tag panel and separable therefrom, for sampling biological material extracted from the ear of the animal when it is pierced by the punch, said sampling device~~means~~ comprising an absorbent material-(9/13), and ~~in that~~ said sampling device~~means~~-(7) is linked to one of the jaws of the applicator tool ~~clamp~~-(3) and the opening of the clamp jaws and/or its removal from the animal's ear separates the sampling device~~means~~-(7) from the tag panel-1 concerned.
2. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1, wherein~~characterised in that~~ the sampling device~~means~~-(7) is attached to the female tag panel.
3. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1 ~~and either of claims 2 and 3-  
[sic] wherein~~, characterised in that ~~the~~ the sampling device~~means~~ comprises an attachment-(8) to be fixed on one of the jaws of the applicator tool, ~~clamp and an absorbent material (9/13).~~
4. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1, wherein~~characterised in that~~ the absorbent material-(9/13) is disposed transversely to the direction in which, in use ~~of penetration of~~ the male punch penetrates through the animal's ear and to the axis of the hollow head-(2) of the female tag panel, the sampling material being posterior to the ear wall.
5. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1 ~~and claims 2, 3 and 4, characterised in that wherein~~ the absorbent material is a sampling strip-(9), wherein one end of which is fixed to the attachment linked to the applicator tool ~~clamp on the attachment~~, and the other is transversal to the direction of penetration of the punch through the animal's ear.
6. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1 ~~and claims 2, 3 and 4, characterised in that wherein~~ the absorbent material-13 is connected by one of its ends transversely to the interior of

the hollow head of the female tag panel and by its other end to an attachment to be fixed to the jaw of the applicator tool~~clamp~~.

7. (currently amended) Applicator tool~~Clamp~~ enabling the fitting of the ear tag ~~according to any one of of claims 31 to 6, characterised in that~~wherein one of the jaws of the applicator tool~~clamp~~ is provided with a fixing arrangement~~means~~ for the attachment to which the absorbent material is linked.

8. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 1 ~~and any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that~~wherein the absorbent material ~~9/13~~ is disposed transversely to the axis of the hollow~~female~~ head of the female tag panel.

9. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim ~~31~~ and any one of claims 2, 3, 4, 5, ~~characterised in that~~wherein the attachment ~~(8)~~ is fixed onto the periphery of ~~the~~an opening of the hollow~~female~~ head of the female tag panel.

10. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim 9, ~~characterised in that~~wherein the attachment ~~(8)~~ and the sampling device~~means~~ are slit ~~(16)~~ over the opening of the hollow~~female~~ head ~~(2)~~ of the female tag panel.

11. (currently amended) Ear tag according to claim ~~31~~ and any one of the preceding claims ~~characterised in that~~wherein the male tag panel, the female tag panel and the attachment ~~(8)~~ are provided with identical symbols for marking and identification.

12. (new) Ear tag for marking and identifying animals the ear tag including a male tag component with a punch that, in use, perforates the animal's ear and penetrates into a hollow head of a female tag component under the action of an applicator tool, the female tag component is provided with a sampling device, lateral to the female component and separable therefrom, for sampling biological material extracted from the ear of the animal when it is pierced by the punch, said sampling device having an absorbent material, and an attachment to fix the sampling device to one of the jaws of the applicator tool and upon opening of the jaws and/or its removal from the animal's ear separates the sampling device from the female tag component.

13. (new) Ear tag according to claim 12, wherein the absorbent material is disposed transversely to the direction in which, in use, the male punch penetrates through the animal's ear and to the axis of the hollow head of the female tag component, the sampling material being posterior to the ear wall.

14. (new) Ear tag according to claim 12 or 13 wherein the absorbent material is a sampling strip, one end of which is fixed to the attachment and the other is located transverse to the direction of penetration of the punch through the animal's ear.

15. (new) Ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the absorbent material is connected by one of its ends transversely to the interior of the hollow head of the female tag panel and by its other end to said attachment.

16. (new) Ear tag according to claim 14 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

17. (new) Ear tag according to claim 16 wherein the attachment and sampling device are slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

18. (new) Ear tag according to claim 15 wherein the attachment is fixed onto the periphery of the hollow head of the female tag component.

19. (new) Ear tag according to claim 18 wherein the attachment and the sampling device are slit over an opening of the hollow head of the female tag component.

20. (new) Ear tag according to claim 12 or 13 wherein the male tag component, the female tag component each include a panel, the panels and the attachment being each provided with identical symbols for marking and identification.